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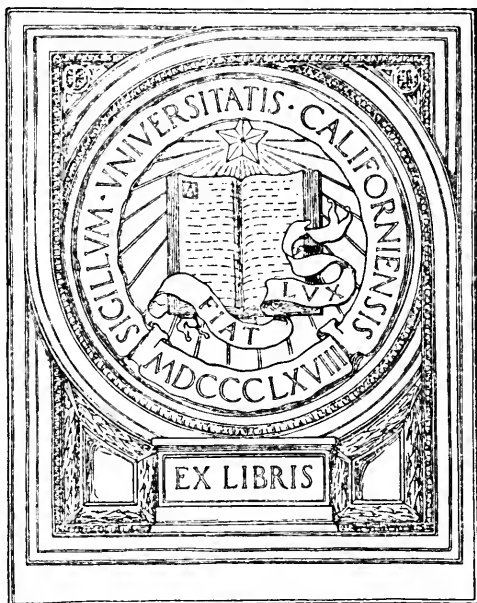
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Answers to Criticisms  
of Piano Class  
Instruction

By  
Ella H. Mason  
And  
Raymond Burrows

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*Answers to Criticisms*  
OF  
PIANO CLASS  
INSTRUCTION

BY

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*Published by*

National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, Inc.  
45 West 45th Street New York, N. Y.

ADDITIONAL TO THE  
TABLES IN FORM NO. 1A

1937

100

60

100

FEB 24 1936

PUBLISHER

ANSWERS TO CRITICISMS OF CLASS PIANO INSTRUCTION

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# Foreword

WE BELIEVE this pamphlet constitutes a valuable addition to the literature on piano classes issued by the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music. Most of our booklets on this subject treat it from the positive angle by presenting the advantages primarily and, in a broad and impartial way, the net benefits to be derived. "Answers to Criticisms of Class Piano Instruction" concentrates on the negative side of this increasingly important subject. The negative side is usually considered to be an unpopular approach in presenting constructive thoughts concerning any line of endeavor, yet if there are misapprehensions, I believe the greatest service can be rendered by treating them boldly, specifically, and directly. Herein lies the great contribution which this booklet makes to the steadily growing literature on group piano instruction, and the authors are to be congratulated on the clear-cut and yet impartial way in which they have undertaken to remove disturbing doubts. They have listed the objections for the purpose of exposing them to expert and non-partisan evaluation based on wide experience, so we may know how real or how imaginary this negative side is. To the skeptics, and particularly to those teachers who have been confronted with difficulties and problems they could not meet, the negative side has seemed very real.

While Miss Mason and Mr. Burrows do not claim, in these answers, to speak with conclusive authority, because no one individual or limited group could do this, they do speak from a long period of successful experience. Although there are undoubtedly many differences of opinion among the leading minds in the piano class field, there is a unanimity of judgment on the point that practically all the difficulties can be overcome. The authors tell how they would handle each problem. Added weight will be attached to their opinion because of the broad character of their experience. Miss Mason encountered and overcame these problems while personally teaching in the schools of Rochester, New York, during a period of eight years and later studied them from a national vantage point as the Piano Class Specialist of the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music. Mr. Burrows has an equally unbiased viewpoint as head of the Piano Class Department of Teachers College, Columbia University, for this department utilizes



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all the methods in its course rather than restricting itself to any one method. The Bureau recommends that those desiring help read the suggestions contained herein and adopt those which appeal to them. The piano teaching profession in general will find much food for thought and those members of it who are already employing the group method but are in need of help will find the specific assistance they desire.

C. M. TREMAINE, Director  
National Bureau for the Advancement  
of Music, Inc.



## Why This Booklet Was Written

FOR several years the students of Piano Class Methods at Teachers' College, Columbia University, have been asked, at the beginning of the course, to designate what they considered the advantages and disadvantages of group piano teaching. Although the advantages stated by these students are usually numerous and enthusiastic, the disadvantages mentioned have been of more concern to us, because they clearly indicate the presence of misunderstandings regarding the purposes and procedures of good class work.

Later in the course it has been our habit to repeat the same assignment. The first papers, stating advantages and disadvantages, were returned to the students with the suggestion that they be revised to express any changes in viewpoint. A comparison of these sets of papers, year after year, has been most illuminating. The same general disadvantages invariably appeared on the first sets of papers, but with few exceptions the second sets mentioned no disadvantages. By the time the students had made further study of group instruction, seen demonstration classes, and had had some experience in practice teaching, they could differentiate between little misapprehensions and actual problems. Most of the so-called "disadvantages" had disappeared from the lists, and those which remained as problems were accompanied by a discussion of plausible methods of solution.

Since the disadvantages first mentioned by these thoughtful groups of teachers apparently represent erroneous impressions which are typical, we have undertaken to answer, on the following pages, the points raised.

Some of these problems, such as sight reading, exist as much in individual as in group instruction, and others merely represent the difference between good and bad teaching. Although such points have nothing to do with the distinction between individual and class work, we have mentioned them here when their discussion seemed demanded by their constant association with class lessons in the minds of teachers investigating this subject.

Although we could have selected a smaller number of statements, thus avoiding certain repetitions, we have chosen to include a large



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number, to bring out different angles of the same subject, thus giving us an opportunity to analyze the problems more carefully and make more detailed suggestions. We feel that this method lends itself to easy reading and ready reference. A careful analysis of all the answers will show that there are basically only three general requirements for success in class piano instruction: moderately-sized classes, well-graded classes, and adequate teaching.

This pamphlet does not pretend to be a treatise on the complicated subject of the development and training of piano teachers. We have simply endeavored to show that it is possible for the thoughtful teacher to solve the many problems which may seem to stand between him and the important field of class piano teaching.

ELLA H. MASON,  
RAYMOND BURROWS.





## Answers To Criticisms Of Class Piano Instruction

1. Since music is an art in which each pupil develops individually, adequate instruction can be given only in private lessons.

This is a thoughtful statement, and the answer to it involves the very basis upon which class work is built. The importance of individual development is a point with which every educator must be deeply concerned. We agree that no training can be considered adequate that does not deal with the specific needs of each pupil. Should class instruction fail in this function, it could not be regarded as a serious medium of piano study.

Fortunately, the experience of successful piano teachers has thoroughly demonstrated that the individual needs of each pupil can be met without disturbing the procedure of the class as a whole. Just how this can be accomplished involves all the different phases of group instruction with which the following questions in this booklet will deal. Therefore, no attempt is made in this first question to give a complete answer, but only to suggest certain lines of thought.

In the first place, it is necessary to present certain fundamentals to every beginning piano pupil. Much of this routine work can be done in ensemble fashion, thus effecting an economy of the teacher's time. The real educational advantage, however, is to be found in the pleasant way in which drill can be supplied. Desirable repetitions which would prove monotonous in a private lesson are readily accepted by the pupils when they are rotating at the piano.

Aside from the problems which prove to be more or less general there are always certain problems relating to the individual child. Even these special difficulties can be handled within the group. Sometimes the teacher can speak quietly to a child without interrupting the class routine. If a trouble becomes longstanding, the reason for it can well be explained to the class as a whole and a sympathetic understanding developed among the class members. Then the associates will share the responsibility of the necessary reminders and give all possible assistance. This friendly and helpful attitude, rather than an impatient, critical one, is a direct reflection of the teacher's kindness and tact in group management and creates that intangible, yet essential quality—"class spirit."

2. In a large class, each pupil does not have sufficient playing time at the piano.

"Were there to be eight pupils in our piano class lesson," says a conscientious observer, "the playing time of each child at the piano would be about seven minutes. How can anyone presume to teach a child to play the piano in seven minutes a week?" The answer is obvious. One cannot. The misconception lies here: If a teacher is thinking in terms of a seven-minute individual lesson for each child, she does not understand the spirit or the underlying principle of a piano class.

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All the pupils should be learning all the time. While one is at the piano, the others are busy, either playing at their keyboards or watching and listening intently in a group about the piano. The pupils who are not playing the piano at the moment should be giving close attention and should be just as absorbed with the learning process as is the child at the instrument.

One of the great advantages of the piano class is that it is almost impossible to "over-teach," as is frequently the temptation in the individual lesson. Instead of depending upon the teacher for a constant reiteration of admonitions, the class pupil soon learns to profit by a suggestion made to another member of his group and in developing some independence reaches closer to the mastery of his difficulties.

### 3. Class work is monotonous because each child has to keep playing and hearing the same music.

The question of monotony is often raised by teachers who have witnessed an inflexible procedure, where each child plays the same piece in turn, and the others do likewise at silent claviers or paper keyboards. Useful as this procedure unquestionably is, the wise piano class teacher knows when to vary it.

Frequently it is advisable to have the pupils form a semi-circle around the piano, where they should listen most attentively to be ready to make criticisms and offer suggestions when the pupil at the piano has finished his selection. This procedure not only develops the pupil's critical power but eliminates a careless round of repetitions when such drill is no longer profitable. It is not necessary that all children go through the same set of motions at the same time, but rather that a piano class should comprise a group of children actively thinking together.

When monotony exists, it is usually found in uninspired teaching, not in the continued use of the same material. Much could be written on the importance of an interesting personality and teaching procedure, but let it suffice for this particular question to lay part of the blame of monotony on causes other than the selection of material. The practice of assigning separate pieces to different member of the group brings additional enjoyment and variety into the piano class and widens the children's listening experience.

### 4. Group instruction provides no opportunity for individual drill on technically difficult passages.

Most pieces contain a difficult spot in which one or more of the pupils will stumble. In such a case, the few moments of special drill which these measures require need not be considered lost time, even if it is but one pupil who makes the drill especially necessary. It is very likely that such measures contain a small technical problem which should be drilled upon by all the pupils in order to gain that mastery of the passage which could not be assumed to exist from a single successful performance.

In case the teacher believes that the problem exists with but one member of the class, the other members can be called into a clinic to analyze the cause of the problem. Every teacher knows that when a pupil realizes why

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his mistake occurred, he is on the road to correcting it easily. A share in the responsibility of locating the difficulty calls forth the concentrated attention of the pupils, quickens their power of observation, and the answer, when found, is more likely to be retained because of the effort extended. Once the cause of the difficulty is located, the pupils may be able to suggest the remedy. If they have not yet gained sufficient experience to do this, the teacher can prescribe the cure. Each child might then try the technical exercise or the sectional treatment of the difficulty which has been recommended, after which the child with the problem can retire to a keyboard to work out the ideas he has received. This process of locating the difficulty and finding the means of escape is of unlimited value in teaching the pupils how to practice.

### 5. Class lessons obliterate the recognition of individual differences.

Individual differences can not be satisfactorily treated until they are fully recognized. Some critics of class work have the impression that a group procedure keeps the attention of the teacher away from those characteristics which differentiate one pupil from another. On the contrary, we may say that the class emphasizes rather than obliterates individual differences, because it affords an opportunity to compare different students with one another. Individuals may differ in temperament, in mental alertness, or in physical dexterity. The recognition and classification of each pupil's type according to those three characteristics is important, both for the teacher and pupil.

Teachers have always tried to understand individualities and to fit their instruction to the specific needs of each pupil, but it is only in the class that the pupil can compare himself with his colleagues and take a more active interest in his assignment because he appreciates his special requirements.

### 6. Enough material for home practice cannot be presented in one weekly lesson.

This comment is usually made by the person who has observed a piano class in which the entire lesson period was devoted to the learning of a certain piece by all the members of the class, leaving little or nothing to be worked out at home. The aim, in such a case, is to have each pupil play the piece satisfactorily before the lesson hour closes. Provided the piece is well learned, something has been accomplished, for the child will retain it until he arrives home and thus has added another piece to his repertoire which he can play for his parents and friends. It would be unfortunate, however, for the pupil to labor under the impression that he would make sufficient progress were his home practice to consist of nothing but a few repetitions of the piece he has already learned.

Even in the first lesson the child can be taught to do some creative practice at home, such as playing the piece in different registers on the piano, or inverting the bass and treble.

After a week or two, the teacher can assign additional pieces for home study, explaining any new features. This gives the pupils the help they

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actually require and leaves them something to work out for themselves. As this ability to do individual work develops, the pupils can prepare increasingly large assignments without leaning too heavily on the instructor.

It is desirable to have two books of parallel advancement to meet the need for extra material. In one of these books, all the members of the class can work at about the same speed, while the pieces in the other book can be learned according to the natural pace of each pupil. This method combines the best features of ensemble and individual work in a class lesson.

### 7. Classes are often unbalanced because of the difficulty in assembling homogeneous groups.

Unfortunately, this statement is often very true. The grouping of the classes is a problem of paramount importance to the teacher, because upon this issue depend many of the successes and failures of group instruction.

The obvious help in this regard is the moderately small group. If a large number of pupils of widely varying abilities are assembled together, the results are bound to be more unsatisfactory than in a smaller class.

The problem is greatly simplified when several beginning classes can be formed at one time. The teacher with only eight enrollments for a beginning class usually has to put them all together, regardless of their varying ages and capacities. If, more fortunately, he has fifty beginning pupils, he can form six or more groups which immediately allows him to place together those of similar talents. In this way, he can have one class of children who make rapid progress, one class who move very slowly, and several groups which represent in-between stages.

This need for many pupils brings the teacher to the question of advertising. The piano class teacher cannot "hide his light under a bushel," and be successful. First, he must be sure that he has the personality and the training to enable him to give group lessons, then he must reach the public and show the advantages of group instruction.

In spite of everything he can do, however, the class teacher sometimes finds himself with a group of children who must be taken together, even though he does not consider them ideally suited to work in the same class. In this case, much ingenuity on the part of the teacher will be needed to obtain satisfactory results.

Just how such a group is to be handled will depend upon its personnel and the problems presented. If there is a wide differentiation in age, the older ones should be guided into a very helpful interest in the younger ones, whose progress may be less rapid. Thus the interest and attention of these older students may be held throughout the lesson by letting them assist the younger members of the class. It often surprises the instructor to find how much teaching can be done by the older students. Not only do the older pupils gain pleasure from teaching the others, but they greatly strengthen their own understanding by formulating their knowledge into explanation and guidance for their fellow students. The teacher must, however, constantly guard against any retarding of the older pupils. They should forge ahead with music of the proper grade of difficulty and receive their due amount of attention in class. When two or more sets of music are

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being used in a group, the teacher demonstrates that the same musical and pianistic principles apply to easy as well as to more difficult compositions. Whether an older or a younger pupil is playing, all the members of the class are working together toward a quick recognition of the musical elements of the performance. The younger ones notice the similarity between their studies and those more advanced, and assimilate much information regarding music they will soon play.

If the group contains pupils who are of the same chronological age but vary widely in mental age and capacity, the problem is much the same as with younger and older students. The words "more talented" and "less talented" might almost be substituted for "older" and "younger" in the above paragraph. The more talented can usually be led into a genuine appreciation of the efforts and accomplishments of the less talented pupils and can be of much assistance when the class attitude is right; the less talented greatly profit from the "pioneering" which is done by the advanced members of the class.

In the rare case when a class is so unbalanced as to make a drastic procedure necessary, the teacher may feel that he must make two divisions within a group, such as the "A's" and the "B's." Although much tact must be used, so that the pupils are not conscious of the purpose of the grouping, the "A's" may represent the more capable children and the "B's" those making less progress. For a part of the hour, the "A's" can be grouped about the piano, playing music of one type while the "B's" are in their seats doing notebook work which has been carefully prepared in advance. Then, the "B's" could take their places at the piano and the "A's" do seat work. It will usually be found that there are certain parts of the lesson in which the "A's" and the "B's" can work together, thus preserving the ensemble idea while the necessary amount of individual attention is being given.

To summarize, let us say that we believe that a teacher of skill and resourcefulness will find a way to manage almost any group he must take together, provided he possess a sufficiently deep desire to bring music to his pupils. As in all other phases of life, great handicaps have been overridden by a refusal to admit defeat. The real class teacher will look constantly for better ways of grouping his pupils, but meanwhile, he will be teaching to the uttermost depths of his capacity and will be opening doors of music to every child who has become his responsibility.

### 8. The progress of the talented pupil will be hindered by keeping him in a class.

In discussing the adjustment of the talented pupil, let us realize that we use the word "talent" to cover many qualities. Few pupils possess a well-rounded and complete talent. If we analyze some of our most able pupils, we will usually find that their playing is unusually good in some phases but weak in others. There is the child who has a natural finger dexterity and fluency, but who plays without sufficient regard for tone quality and fineness of nuance. Such a pupil profits from the class discussion of interpretation and from a comparison of his playing with that of the other members of the class. Then there is the reverse of this talent—the child who plays musically but needs much technical development. While the class pupils recognize and appreciate the evidences of his musicianship,

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they make him aware of his technical deficiencies and spur him to genuine efforts along this line. The chief talent of a pupil may be in still another direction, such as fluency in sight reading or readiness to memorize. These special abilities serve to broaden the outlook of the class by indicating the component parts necessary to well-rounded musicianship. Talented pupils who study individually have few opportunities to take inventory and frankly evaluate their own playing by a comparison with others.

As the discerning class teacher studies each pupil and analyzes the extent of talent manifested, he will sometimes find a student who needs extra instruction outside of the class. We do not claim that group lessons can be arranged to meet all the needs of every child, but we believe that in the great majority of cases, a beginning pupil profits more from a class which is well graded and well taught than from an individual lesson. The talented child needs the features distinctive of the class, but, in exceptional cases where no group exists with the right personnel, the pupil should be taught separately. The constant problem of the teacher is to understand each student thoroughly and to determine the best means of enabling him to work toward his highest point of development.

### 9. There is no time for special attention to the talented student.

The talented child is a particular problem in time apportionment because he is able to prepare longer assignments than the other members of the class. Obviously, this situation is somewhat relieved if the teacher insists upon quality in preference to quantity. So often talented pupils are distinguished for the quantity of their output rather than the fineness of performance which should be required of them. It is the quality that should be in direct proportion to the amount of talent. The talented pupil can acquire a high standard of performance which should be evident in even his first playing of a piece in the class.

Such a pupil, who will naturally give the best performance of the group, should receive all the attention he needs. Neither the time spent in this way, nor the good performance, should be discouraging to pupils or teacher; rather, the work of this talented student should, if tactfully handled, prove an asset, for it will suggest possibilities to the others and pave the way for their next week's work. It is evident that the talented pupil requires less instruction and less practicing during the next week in order to continue satisfactory work on a piece he has in common with the other members of his class. Therefore, he can be held rigidly to a finer performance than can be expected from some of the weaker pupils, and, as soon as he is ready, another composition may be assigned which the rest of the group will not attempt. This gives the other members of the class an increased listening repertoire and the benefit of the general musical criticisms without overcrowding their assignment.

The establishment of a high standard of quality for the talented pupil, the utilization of his performance as a model for the class, and his value in increasing the listening repertoire of the other students take partial care of the time problem. Still, it would be increasingly difficult to meet the needs of the talented pupil, month after month, were it not for the fact that he has naturally been promoted to more and more advanced groups. These advanced groups usually contain only three or four students, in order to allow plenty of time for the individual development of each pupil.

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### 10. The teacher might give more attention to the weaker pupil, allowing the brilliant pupil to "fool away" time.

This problem is another phase of question nine. The time element is serious if the teacher is obliged to concentrate too much on the talented pupil, and is an equally serious problem if the weak pupil monopolizes the teacher's attention. It is therefore necessary, as we have already said, to make a wise distribution of the time, and in this matter of time apportionment a teacher demonstrates his skill. This applies in any type of group instruction. Be the lesson one in geography or in piano playing, the teacher must learn how to manage the "slow" pupil along with the "quick" pupil. Far from considering the solution of this problem an impossibility in a piano class, it would seem that the piano teacher might have more facilities for coping with it than does the teacher of most school subjects, for there are the infinite possibilities of selecting music which meets individual needs. Since the same general understanding of musical and technical principles is necessary, the "quick" pupil may play more difficult pieces and the "slow" pupil be happy with music just as lovely but making less demand upon his skill. Thus the "quick" pupil need not be held back nor the "slow" pupil thrust beyond his ability.

Again, the matter of regrading will have taken care of the pupils who are furthest from the average. Pupils obviously lacking the ability to keep up with their class members can be placed in slower-moving groups. The teacher who is specializing in class work may find it advantageous to have one small group of very slow pupils, just as he has small groups for the especially talented.

### 11. The very slow child falls behind the group and becomes discouraged.

The very slow child presents a grave difficulty in any classroom. In this question, we are referring to the problem of the slow child in reference to the effect of class work on his personality. What should be the solution of his problem in the piano class depends entirely upon his individual reaction to the group in which he is working. If he does become discouraged and suffers from a sense of inferiority, he should be placed in a very slow-moving group, or else tactful arrangements made to have him take private lessons, if he is to continue his music study.

When it has been impossible or undesirable to demote a slow child, we have often seen him take a great deal of pleasure in those few things which he was able to do in his piano class lesson. In such cases, he has had the interest of the other more fortunate members of the group, who have appreciated his genuine efforts and have kindly and enthusiastically become his instructors, each one giving him as much assistance as possible. In this situation, the subnormal child often is flattered by the amount of attention he is receiving and therefore does not suffer from a feeling of inferiority.

Since the mental attitude depends upon his success with the material he is using, it may be well to make suggestions for providing suitable pieces. There are three ways to plan the slow child's repertoire in class. One is to provide him with separate pieces somewhat easier than those learned by the majority. The second way is to select certain easier pieces

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from the regular class repertoire and let him work on these while the others continue with more difficult ones. Another device possible with some pieces is to have the slow child play part of the same piece the class is learning. In a set of variations, for example, he might learn one or two versions of the theme while his colleagues work on the whole piece, or, in a three-part form, he may offer part one as a separate selection. By such means as these, a child may remain in a class slightly beyond his grade without greatly lowering the quality of his performance or becoming unduly discouraged with his work.

### 12. It is difficult to rearrange classes to meet the needs of varying advancement.

The difficulty encountered by teachers in rearranging classes is usually due to the small number of pupils to whom they are giving class instruction. In statement seven, dealing with another aspect of this subject, we have pointed out the value in advertising for the class teacher, in order that he may have a large number of pupils. We may just as well realize that many classes have failed because the teacher had so few pupils that when their individual development carried them to greatly differing stages of advancement, there was no way of regrading them. The teacher who has only six class pupils will compare with the teacher with an enrollment of a hundred and fifty or two hundred pupils in the same relation that the one-room school house compares with our well-graded city schools. In pointing out the problem which exists for the teacher with few class pupils, we do not wish to be unduly discouraging. There is a way to solve almost every difficulty, and this one will seem to have redeeming features when we realize that even the little country schools have been able to turn out very fine work when they were fortunate enough to secure teachers with versatility and perseverance. Difficult as public school instruction has been under some circumstances, never for a moment has a return to the old-fashioned method of private tutoring been advocated.

It is only fair to consider that most piano classes are still in a stage of development not far beyond that of the early Colonial schools. This realization that we are still pioneering in piano work should encourage the interested teacher to devise additional means of dealing with the individual within the group, even when the class is poorly graded, and thus make his work so helpful that more pupils will want to study. Good teaching increases the success of the piano class movement in an endless cycle of growth producing more growth: good results attract more pupils, which in turn make possible finer grading, which brings about an even better quality of work.

### 13. When children drop out of classes, there arises a financial problem for the teacher.

The truth of this statement is quite apparent. The problem, then, is for the teacher to have as few "casualties" as possible. Here might come up the whole subject of the teacher's personality, his ability to command the interest of the group, and the high musical value of the material he selects. But let us assume a recognition of the importance of these qualities and turn to a few specific suggestions.



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The teacher should always collect fees in advance for a term of class lessons. The longer the term, the fewer opportunities the pupil has to drop out during the year. Dividing the school year into four terms often proves a successful plan. If the children are financially able to bring money at one time for a half year's work, the assurance of continuity is greater.

Another suggestion is that teachers encourage the mothers to attend the classes as frequently as possible. Teachers often report that they never lose pupils whose mothers have visited the groups, know the goals toward which the teacher is working, and realize his interest in his pupils and his ability to secure the desired results, providing the necessary parental cooperation is given.

Classes do diminish, however, even under the best conditions. When this occurs, two groups of the same grade can often be combined and thus leave time for the teacher to form a new class. Experienced teachers have reported that they have had more than enough new applicants for class study to compensate for those who drop out for legitimate reasons.

An excellent plan is for the teacher to work out a sliding scale of prices, charging advanced pupils more, and taking them in smaller groups. If this does not seem feasible, the teacher can charge the same price for all pupils. In this way, the compensation from the larger beginning classes would be sufficient to make up for the smaller, more advanced groups. On this basis the teacher would figure the number of pupils in large and small classes which he can accommodate during the week, and then determine the price per pupil. Such a policy is used throughout university education, where students pay the same fees whether they are taught in small seminar conferences or in large lecture classes.

### 14. Class lessons make music stereotyped and limit the beauty of the musical horizon.

Here again, we feel called upon to lay this charge made against class work at the door of the teacher. If class instruction is given in a stereotyped manner, and the opportunity to stress the beauty of music is lost, it is unquestionably the fault of the teacher. Classes can be handled with unlimited variety in procedure and use of material.

The teacher who is alert to find opportunities for increasing musical understanding in individual lessons is usually delighted with the even greater possibilities in group instruction. The different personalities in a class lend variety and breadth of scope to the lesson. Each pupil responds differently even to the same piece. By encouraging the pupils to express their individuality, the teacher finds that the different ideas and interpretations give a wider outlook than would be possible in a lesson combining but two personalities—teacher and pupil. The effect of one personality on another produces a blend of temperament that further widens the musical horizon.

Let us consider the things that will give music study vitality and avoid a stereotyped feeling or a sense of limitation. We have already pointed out that it is not necessary to give the same compositions to all the members

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of a group. A variety in material used should at once remove any suggestion of monotony. Where two or more pupils are working on the same piece or study, a comparison of their different interpretations adds great interest for those listening as well as for the players. This process of studying interpretation and working for quality of performance, if it is in the hands of a teacher with enthusiasm and real musicianship, is a sure preventive of monotony. The more skill the teacher has in working out an efficient and economical class procedure, the more time he will have to delve into an analysis of the form, construction, and characteristic qualities of the compositions. Such factors, as every teacher knows, furnish the leaven in the lesson and transform the bare learning process into additional experiences in the realm of beauty.

We are not claiming musical Utopia for group instruction, but we maintain that the commonly observed difficulties in class lessons have, sooner or later, to be traced to deficiencies in the individual teacher rather than in the group idea. If there are times when our class lessons seem to lack a pulsing vitality and a forward sweep, let us not excuse ourselves on the ground that group instruction is at fault. Rather, let us take a detailed inventory of our methods, and, driven by a deep desire to make our work more efficient and bring more beauty into the lives of our pupils, let us take one more step in that continued growth which is the essential of every good teacher.

### 15. There is little opportunity to select music to suit the needs of the individual pupils.

This statement was undoubtedly made by a person whose conception of class piano teaching consisted of handing out the same book to all the class and then giving the same assignment each week to every member. Although it is most advisable to begin in this fashion, few weeks will have passed before the individual capacities within the class become manifest. As these develop, the assignments should be varied to meet the individual needs. This can be done by assigning longer lessons for some class members; by suggesting that the more capable pupils transpose pieces into many keys, whereas only one or two are assigned to the less talented members; by the use of two books, suggested under statement six; and by giving a greater number of separate pieces and more advanced ones to those children who are forging ahead without difficulty. Even a class composed of fairly average pupils presents a need for variety of pieces to meet the individual requirements.

### 16. The standard for interpretation and finesse must be lowered for class lessons.

Teachers who believe this statement and whose class experiments bear it out, should confine themselves to individual lessons in which they can obtain the artistic results they find it impossible to achieve in group work. As teachers with considerable experience with individual lessons, and as serious students of the piano, we cannot advocate any type of instruction which necessitates a lowering of standards. We recognize the fact that much inferior work has been done under the name of class teaching, but

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is not this equally true of individual teaching? Each conscientious teacher must set his artistic standards and refuse to depart from them.

What can we reasonably expect in the line of interpretation and finesse in a piano class? To make our discussion a little more definite, suppose we assume that we are teaching a group of average beginners about nine or ten years of age. At the first lesson, when they approach the piano, a good tone quality will be suggested. Although most teachers use few technical terms, the pupils should gain, through observation and imitation, a relaxed hand position and correct use of arm weight. Before many weeks have passed, each child should have acquired a fairly good tone, which he is always alert to improve. Then there comes that very important subject of rhythm. Class work provides unusual opportunities for rhythm drills, both detached, and correlated with the pieces the pupil is able to perform. Stress on rhythm should start with the first lesson and be presented so definitely that all the children develop their rhythmic sense and apply it specifically to everything they play. The location and the import of the melody should be well understood and an adequate tone employed in bringing it out. This implies immediately that the pupils must develop, in the very early stages, an independence of hands in order to produce a melody and an accompaniment. Phrasing is another matter with which the teacher must deal in the first lesson. No pupils are too young to learn that the pianist's hands "breathe" as does the singer. During the first year, pupils of the age mentioned should have no difficulty in developing clearly defined legato, portamento, and staccato touches and gaining the ability to use them as the piece seems to indicate. Then the great realm of coloring in music should be opened to the pupils. They can be taught from the first lesson that a melody never runs on a dead level; it is full of motion and life, constantly building toward a climax or receding from a high point. Sequences and repetitions can be quickly recognized to suggest different degrees of tonal intensity. These are the bare essentials, all of which can be well started and more or less worked out during one year of piano class study.

Far from limiting the interpretive possibilities, group instruction should enrich them. Suppose the class of children is standing in a small semi-circle about the piano, with one pupil playing. When he has finished, there follows a lively discussion of the merits of his performance, the tone quality which he employed, the accuracy of his phrasing, the differentiation between melody and accompaniment, and the amount of crescendo and diminuendo he employed. After weeks of careful watching and intent listening, the children become very keen in their criticisms and, with small fingers, quickly point out two phrases which were run together, or a diminuendo or a ritenuto which was not evident. Sometimes a teacher will choose to put on the blackboard, with the assistance of the class, a list of many of the important interpretive phases of the piece, and the children will concentrate their attention on these different points and demand consideration of them from each other. The realization that eager pupils are listening for each detail spurs the one at the piano to his best efforts, and the quickened musical understanding which the listener gains can, in turn, be applied to his own playing. This constant, kindly comparison keeps the class pupils reaching out toward more finished playing and should be the means of bringing into the piano class a high standard of musicianship.

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### 17. The class teacher is unable to do good work because the process becomes uninspired and routine.

The teacher who falls into the difficulties that we have warned against in the last three answers will find that not only the pupils are hampered by the lack of variety and absence of musical finish, but that the teacher himself is unable to enjoy his work. Certainly the pupil is unfortunate whose lot it is to study with the instructor who allows any teaching process to become "uninspired and routine." If the lesson begins one week with some scales or arpeggios, the next week the first thing on the program might be a reviewing of the class repertoire, with each pupil contributing his favorite number to the little recital, while the other members are listening attentively to give favorable criticisms as well as suggestions for further improvement of these pieces. If the lesson one week stresses a technical difficulty, the next week it may be largely given over to a working out of the colorings and shadings which give infinite variety to the music and which every child can attain to some extent.

A constantly changing order gives some variety to the period, but the real essence which makes each lesson different from every other is found in a new glimpse of the musical beauty which should be a part of the teacher's life, and which he feels a need to impart. It is the desire to share this rich aesthetic experience which forms the underlying urge to teach. As he brings to the pupil a fresh insight into the realm of music, the teacher avoids the emptiness of an uninspired routine.

### 18. Class pupils do not learn to read at sight.

No objection to group instruction has been more frequently and conscientiously made than this statement. In a great many cases, it is true that class teachers neglect sight reading. Once again, we blame the teacher, for a group lesson admirably lends itself to work in sight reading.

Frequently this criticism has been brought about by the sincere but misapplied efforts of many teachers to follow principles of modern pedagogy which in themselves are entirely sound. The psychologist tells us that we "learn by doing" and that we should teach "the thing before the sign," which in piano study means that some keyboard experience should precede a knowledge of staff notation. This explains the development of the "song" and "rote" approaches, which enable the child to play enjoyable music from the first lesson. These methods progress so easily that many teachers forget the purpose for which they are being used. The "song" or "rote" approaches are like a bridge from the known to the unknown. Many teachers find themselves in the unfortunate position of getting out on the bridge and forgetting that they are eventually to land on the other side. Teachers who use these approaches successfully know how to make them grow into definite sight reading work.

Even teachers who stress sight reading at the beginning do not always succeed in attaining the desired results. They may start out in the right direction, but they fail to reach the goal. It is necessary to give attention to sight reading at each lesson.

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The development of sight reading power is a three-fold process. The first step involves the constant association of music already learned with its notation on the staff. The second step is a thorough reading drill on the symbols thus learned by association. The final step, or actual sight reading, is the recognition of these symbols in new pieces of music. There are many ways to conduct an isolated reading drill. Some element of these three steps toward reading ability should be present from the very early lessons. The foundation should be laid in the first lesson.

The very fact that in some schools class pupils are in demand for playing with the orchestra and other accompanying work which involves sight reading demonstrates that it is possible for the classes to develop fluency in reading. It may be permissible to allow kindergarten children to have some musical experience at the piano without any reading, but the teacher whose pupils are seven or more years old can consider one important phase of his work a failure unless the class is able to read simple music during the first year.

### 19. Group lessons do not provide sufficient time to stress technic.

The development of a good technical equipment occupies so large a part of each lesson given by many conscientious private teachers that one naturally wonders how the class teacher will find time to give this subject sufficient attention. Interpretation, you may say, can be taught in groups, but how can an individual's technic be developed unless he is sitting right at the piano throughout the lesson? Let us go on record as saying that we not only recognize the importance of technic, but that we accept no teaching procedure which does not provide the pupil with the technical equipment which he must have as a vehicle for musical expression. We must constantly subject our methods of teaching technic to the acid test of tangible results.

First let us mention many points that are taught best by imitation, observation, and criticism from other students. Under this head will come: correct sitting posture, use of the arms, wrists, fingers, and correct hand position. Individual points that are repeated in a private lesson until the pupil forgets their meaning lose their monotony when the teacher has an entire class to help stress them. The pupil may pay very little attention while a teacher keeps repeating "Curve your fingers," but if he knows that every member of the class is watching to see if his fingers are curved, he will be careful of his hand position.

Some teachers who asked this question no doubt had in mind the need of spending much time to hear scales, arpeggios, finger exercises, and technical studies. This phase of piano teaching is very important, and the good class gives considerable attention to it, but in limiting the period spent by each individual at the piano, the class makes a distinct gain. The teacher becomes conscious of the need for efficient presentation of the form and fingering of scales and arpeggios. For example, when the members of a class are ready, they can work out all the major scales in one lesson and then proceed to practice a few each week. Assignments can be made without a further expenditure of time. Other types of technical work can be presented with similar efficiency.

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In hearing the assignments, the teacher can practice a further economy and rotate in such a way that he does not hear every pupil play each scale or exercise, but he must, of course, assure himself that the students are practicing in the right manner and have been given all the help they need. The competitive spirit, which we have already stressed as a potent factor in class instruction, functions as efficiently in the development of technic as in interpretative power, and stimulates quality as well as quantity with the least possible expenditure of time.

Class teachers who use dummy keyboards or claviers are at a great advantage in presenting technical work. Although building technic involves listening to the tone production at the piano, much of the purely muscular development can be done at these keyboards, and young children enjoy it, as the group activity takes away the feeling of drudgery.

Since pupils working together for their mutual development realize the importance of an adequate technical equipment, teacher and pupils will cooperate in finding time to give it due place. Although we advocate no particular school of technic, we are certain that the good class teacher will know what work of this kind he will want to present and how to establish a class procedure which makes allowance for this important phase of piano study.

### 20. The use of cardboard keyboards prevents proper technical development.

The cardboard keyboards are very useful in the early stages of technical development, as they encourage accurate spacing of the fingers in quiet position on the keyboard as well as when playing. The teacher can stress the value of practicing for firmness of fingers and hands while a pupil is hearing his colleague play at the piano. Even after a pupil has played a piece correctly at the piano he is willing to continue practice on a keyboard if he knows it will strengthen his fingers.

Some technicians disapprove of raising the fingers away from the keys, as is necessary in playing on a cardboard, but it is generally agreed that a certain amount of finger raising in early practice is good for finger independence, and it is much better to do this away from the piano, so that the association at the piano of close contact with keys to produce beautiful tone will not be spoiled in an effort to train finger brilliance. The advantage of keyboard drill in this respect is similar to the gain made by earlier schools of technic who use practice at a table for finger independence.

The continued use of cardboard keyboards, or any type of practice keyboard, throughout the entire course of class piano study is not recommended, and it is not even necessary to use keyboards in the beginning lessons. A piano class does not always mean a group of children sitting at keyboards with one child at the piano. During many stages of development, and in parts of every lesson, we have already mentioned the advisability of having all the children around the piano, taking turns at performing, but continually working with their minds.

Teachers who like to use the individual keyboards, but are not satisfied with cardboards, can procure inexpensive dummy keyboards with action similar to the real piano.

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### 21. If the classes begin with pieces there will be no chance to lay the proper technical foundation.

This is one of the problems mentioned in the foreword that represents a change in method not necessarily brought about by class teaching. Either the class or the private lesson may use this changed presentation of technic, but the playing approach has become so associated with class teaching that we discuss it here, while making the reservation that class teachers who wish may still present some technic before the first pieces.

A very considerable part of the work which was formerly covered by technical exercises can be more efficiently accomplished through playing attractive pieces. An example of this is in the use of five finger exercises. Various forms of five finger exercises are usually given to develop hand position, finger strength and independence, and control of quantity and quality of tone production, with the hand in quiet position. All these ends can be gained just as surely and more quickly through the use of attractive pieces in five finger position. The reason for this may be summed up in pedagogical language by reference to the law of learning, which says that "other things being equal, a Stimulus-Response bond is strengthened or weakened in accordance to the satisfaction or annoyance which accompanies its exercise."\* Even without appealing to the authority of educational experts, every teacher knows that a pupil does better work when he enjoys what he is doing.

There is nothing to be gained, however, by trying to avoid all technical drill outside of pieces. Isolated technical drill is justified by its continued emphasis on the difficulty. Ten minutes of concentrated technical practice will strengthen the pianist's technical equipment as much as an hour of playing through pieces which only occasionally present technical difficulties. The reason for delaying this valuable technical drill until after the pupil has had some experience playing pieces is that he may see the value of technical exercises before he devotes his time to them. The old teaching method prepared for the difficulty before it arose; the new way allows the pupil to find the difficulty first and presents the technical drill when the need is felt.

Technic developed through special drill motivated by one particular piece acts as a preparation for the next piece involving the same problem, so that in the long run technical drills anticipate as well as follow the occurrence of related technical problems in musical compositions. It is only in the early stages of instruction then that the newer method of presenting technic is radically different from the old.

(\*) William H. Kilpatrick "Foundations of Method."

### 22. Class teaching is so difficult that few teachers are capable of success.

Class teaching is undoubtedly more difficult than private teaching, and the number of unsatisfactory teachers now handling classes is doing much harm to the class piano movement in general, and to their pupils in particular. The good studio teacher, however, should not be so modest as to assume that the difficulties of class teaching are too great for him to overcome.

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He should realize that the best private teacher usually makes the best class teacher, as both fields involve the same rigorous requirements of personality and musicianship. The class movement is a challenge to the capable teacher and an opportunity for him to exert his influence over a large number of pupils. The teacher who has real enthusiasm for his work should not feel that he must confine his talents to the individual pupil. If he has genuine teaching ability he will find that the inspiration of a class makes him an even better teacher.

### 23. Even the capable teacher requires special training for group work.

Capable teachers who have attempted class instruction without special preparation have often been discouraged because of their inability to handle the class efficiently. Even if their failure is only partial, they are sometimes faced with the embarrassing condition of finding their results with class pupils considerably inferior to what they could do with the same pupils at private lessons.

It would be folly to try to evade this issue. The teacher needs not only a thorough understanding of the principle and procedure of class piano work, but also a period of regular observation of good class teaching with discussion of the methods involved, and a term of supervised practice teaching. This need no longer presents an insurmountable problem, for there are now over one hundred and fifty universities, schools, and colleges offering normal courses for class piano teachers. The constantly increasing number of institutions presenting these normal courses shows a definitely established national interest in the movement. However, there is considerable variation in the content and quality of these courses, and it is recommended that teachers in search of such training make careful investigation to be sure that the contemplated instruction is of a high standard and adapted to their particular needs.

### 24. The weakness of a mediocre teacher will be greatly magnified.

We have to begin the answer to this statement by granting that it is entirely true. There is no doubt that the teacher whose general lack of ability makes private teaching unsuccessful will find class teaching even more difficult. There are, however, one or two redeeming features to this gloomy situation. The first is that a really inferior teacher should not be in the piano teaching profession. If he is able to endure as a private teacher because a single pupil is not strong enough to rebel against his inadequacy, we should be thankful for a new situation which would reveal to the teacher that his real place is in another field and thus make it possible for his pupils to find more satisfactory instruction.

Many teachers, however, whose work seems to be mediocre are capable of vast improvement. They should be grateful to the piano class for emphasizing their mistakes and indicating possibilities of development. For example, a teacher's only fault may be a lack of familiarity with available piano material. He may know enough pieces for one pupil but discover in class work that he needs to increase his teaching repertoire, as every pupil should have his pieces selected with regard to his individual needs. A narrow teaching repertoire is just as inexcusable in a private lesson as



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in a class. The only difference is that the class makes the weakness more evident. The example just given is easily understood because both the weakness and its correction are obvious. Some of the many qualities which are necessary for either class or individual teaching, and whose absence would be easily observed when the teacher undertakes classes include the following:

1. good musicianship.
2. well-developed personality.
3. a psychological understanding of different types of pupils.
4. versatility in dealing with different temperaments.
5. an organized method of teaching that assumes a familiarity with all the available approaches.
6. a good working plan, so elastic as to be subject to change whenever an improvement is possible.

Elsewhere in the pamphlet we have discussed the special qualities which a private teacher would need to develop before undertaking class work. It is interesting to note, however, that these many attributes of good teaching are needed by every teacher. If the instructor who gains some class experience finds that it shows forth his little failings more clearly than he felt them in his individual lessons, he will strive to strengthen his work and will appreciate this opportunity to uncover subtle weaknesses.

### 25. Class lessons do not furnish incentive for home practice.

Since practicing at home between lessons forms an important part of each pupil's musical development, the success of any scheme of instruction is largely dependent on the amount and quality of practice by the pupil himself. There are a number of plans for encouraging home practice which may be used in either class or individual instruction, but there are several reasons why the class lesson should especially encourage home work.

We have already mentioned the importance of showing the pupils how to practice. If the class lesson introduces each problem of the lesson assigned, and leaves the pupil fired with the ambition to master the work given, he is sure to prepare it for the next lesson.

The competitive element in a class encourages good homework. The pupils can compare not only quantity and quality of work prepared at home, but also the method of preparation. It is possible to have keen competition in planning the use of home practice time for the most efficient results. The pupil with the best work can explain when and how he practiced, and so inspire the rest of the group to improve their practicing efficiency.

The best solution of all is the development of a real love for the performance of music. The successful class should be able to do this. Some teachers have found it desirable to begin without requiring home practice, with the result that the pupils voluntarily plan more and more time for home work, until they have a self-imposed practice schedule of considerable proportions.

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### 26. The slower progress necessitated by class lessons creates a "lukewarm" feeling for music.

Let us first consider whether classes actually necessitate slower progress. We are convinced that under proper conditions they do not. It is interesting to discuss this point with many class teachers. Some are very positive in their assertions that the "fun" element and the competition in the class stimulate more rapid progress than is usually possible with individual lessons; others report that private pupils make a better showing in the performance of a few pieces, but that the class pupils acquire a more thorough background of musicianship which makes them learn more rapidly; still others believe there is little difference in the rate of progress with the average pupils, whether the instruction be group or individual. We believe that the well-graded piano class need not and should not make any sacrifices, either in quality of results obtained or in the rate of progress.

The unsatisfactory condition suggested in the term "lukewarm feeling" is one of the most lamentable results of inadequate class teaching. Whatever problems and difficulties are inherent in the nature of class instruction, this question of love and enthusiasm for music is one point which should be entirely in favor of the group idea. It is the very first point in testing the success of a piano class. No matter how fine the work is in other aspects, the class teacher has not succeeded unless the pupils show a real love for music.

In answering the statement, it is only fair to submit the evidence of successful piano classes. The enthusiasm with which the pupils come to the lessons, the eagerness with which they approach the piano, the desire to remain for other piano classes besides their own, the pleas for the teacher to play during the lesson, the excited accounts of music heard at home and elsewhere, and the delighted reports of parents all give testimony to the attitude toward music which may be engendered in a good class.

### 27. The use of keyboards prevents the production of beautiful tone quality.

To answer this question, it is first necessary to stress two facts: that a piano class does not necessarily use silent keyboards, and secondly, that even in classes where the auxiliary keyboards are used, every child plays at the real piano every lesson. The physical action of the fingers, hand, and arm can be taught at a dummy keyboard, but the final test of their efficient result in a beautiful tone can only be made through the ear. It is by actually listening to his own playing and that of others that the pupil learns to use the best tone quality.

The study of how to produce a beautiful tone begins when the first child comes to the piano. The class listens to the sound, compares it to the teacher's playing of the same melody, and later to the playing of each member of the class. The best characteristics of each player are noted and an effort is made to combine them. This gives the pupils a better standard of what can be done and enables them to observe the physical conditions which produce the tone they find most satisfactory.\*

(\*) The importance of what the child hears at the piano is so great that at this point we feel we must recommend that all studios and homes be equipped with as fine an instrument as possible and that it be kept in tune regularly.



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### 28. Group instruction makes it possible for one teacher to handle many pupils and thus tends to eliminate other teachers.

Certain private teachers have opposed the class movement because of their alarm that they might lose all their pupils. Theoretically, they have reason for alarm: most piano work, they fear, will eventually be taught in classes, and the private teacher will have the same relation to the class teacher which the academic tutor now has to the school teacher. We admit that this would be a desirable condition, and that the time may come when most piano teachers will be in the class teaching field. For the present, however, we can easily allay the fears of the private teacher by examining the situation as it is today. Class teachers are concerning themselves primarily with beginning pupils, and they are reaching many beginners who would otherwise never have lessons. After the second, third, or fourth year, most of these pupils will be available for individual instruction. The field already has been and will continue to be enlarged to include many whom the private teacher, unaided, could not have reached, and those who come to him should have a background of musicianship and love for music which will make the probability of success much greater than it might have been with beginning students. Would not the private teacher be happy to exchange his present field of beginning pupils for an increased number of more advanced?

Another point for the private teacher to remember is that if he has a few hours a week to spare, he will find it to his advantage to prepare himself for class instruction and teach a few groups in his studio or in a public school.

### 29. Group instruction makes it increasingly difficult for a class teacher to collect an adequate fee for individual lessons.

Several private teachers have objected to group instruction for the business reason that they have difficulty in collecting their regular fee for private lessons. There is no doubt that many children now studying privately at a fee which represents a great sacrifice by the parents, should, and would, change to class lessons if the opportunity were offered. Those who prefer private lessons, and can afford them, however, are quick to see that the teacher's time is valuable and must be paid for, even when only one pupil is studying at a time.

It has been suggested that class instruction is so inherently sound educationally that the piano teacher ought to support the movement regardless of the economic considerations. If it is, as we believe, inherently sound educationally, its increasing acceptance cannot be prevented, for the public's interest must ultimately be served. We recommend group teaching on grounds of self-interest as well as for altruistic reasons, and base our opinion on the economic advantage to the teacher. It is too early in many communities to make a conclusive statement, but we are glad to report that actual practice is already showing a financial advantage for the private teacher who also teaches in class. His ability to teach groups of children gives him a special prestige. If he wants private pupils, he usually has no difficulty in filling his available studio time at his regular fee.

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### 30. The discipline problem is greater in the classes than in private lessons.

The discipline problem is an old enemy of teaching in general. Some modern pedagogues attempt to meet the situation without using the word "discipline," but we still have to face the issue. There is no doubt that this problem is greater in class than in a private lesson, and there is no doubt that the lesson cannot be effective when the discipline worry is taking most of the teacher's attention.

Studies of the discipline problem in general education have shown that the ultimate solution does not lie in the use of the "big stick" or an elaborate system of punishments, but in a presentation of subject matter which so occupies the interest of the student that he has no time to be unruly. The development of the "interest theory," however, brings with it a conflict of extrinsic and intrinsic interest. An interest created by "sugar coating" with schoolroom games, or with a system of rewards as an end in itself, will never solve the discipline problem. The interest must be inherent in the subject\*.

A practical example of the discipline problem may be found in a sight reading lesson. Imagine eight children in a semi-circle around a piano playing in turn from a book of sight reading material. Without adequate leadership, the pupils would be restless while waiting for each other to play. The "big-stick" disciplinarian will use fear of immediate or delayed punishment to maintain order. As soon as the fear is removed, disorder returns. The "sugar coating" followers of the interest theory will award a gold star to each child who reads a piece accurately. This may help, but unless it is followed up by a more intrinsic interest in the music, it will affect each one only at the piano, and not while his colleagues are performing.

The teacher who knows the value of real interest in the music itself will direct the attention to each of the different factors which make up a good performance. He can have the listeners watching whether the performer's eyes are kept on the music, whether he plays with accuracy of rhythm, correct notes, correct fingers, good finger position, good tone quality, crescendos and diminuendos, and other phases of interpretation. Such a policy keeps the class busy in a way that will improve the sight reading of each one, at the same time that it serves to remind the person at the piano of all the points he must observe.

As we have already suggested, the real solution of the discipline problem lies in the ability of the teacher to make music study so vital and so enjoyable to the pupils that they wish to spend all their time forging ahead. When this spirit permeates the class lesson, the pupils take much of the responsibility of reproving any class member whose mind might temporarily wander from the subject at hand, and who might introduce an element of disorder were not the pupils unwilling to have their class procedure interrupted. The same dynamic interest in musical growth which flows from the teacher to the pupils goes further than the elimination of a negative discipline situation; it builds up a positive desire for achievement and, by focusing every resource on the problem at hand, enables the pupils to realize their full power at each stage of advancement.

(\*) Dewey "Interest and Effort in Education" is recommended for a further discussion of this point.

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### 31. While one pupil is playing at the piano, the others lose interest.

As has already been mentioned, the well-conducted piano class keeps all the pupils busy all the time. The technic of motivating the activity of the pupils when not at the piano is an essential part of the class teacher's equipment. If dummy keyboards are used, the teacher can pay most of his attention to those at the keyboards, as it is easy to hear what is being played at the real piano. If all the pupils are centered around one piano, the teacher has the more difficult task of keeping track of what is going on in the pupils' minds. Watching for strong and weak points, and mentally going through the process of performance is an excellent way to develop inner-feeling for music, which is the ability to hear, see, and feel a piece of music without the physical use of any of these three senses. Often the children watching attentively around the piano are gaining more at the moment than the one who is doing the playing, as those listening are free to follow the performance objectively.

### 32. Class attention wanes with the monotony of hearing each pupil play the same assignment.

This statement is given here because it states again an objection that is so often mentioned by people who have seen unsatisfactory piano classes. We will answer by reviewing two points already made and mentioning one new one. (1.) The repetition afforded in the piano class makes drill more interesting than in a private lesson in cases where a number of repetitions are actually needed by the pupils. (2.) All the children in a piano class do not necessarily play the same assignment.

The third point involves an important issue in developing the technic of practice. Many a student fails to reach artistic perfection in performing a piece for the simple reason that he grows tired of it just at the time he is beginning to play it correctly. Hearing or playing a piece many times has one of two effects on a person: either he will grow to enjoy it more and more, or he will gradually like it less and less. When repetition increases the enjoyment of a piece, it is because the hearer finds new beauty in it each time. It is this ability to discover new charms in each phrase and to think of new ways to increase the artistry of the performance that makes the repetition of daily practice not only bearable but inspiring. If a piano class can develop this attitude towards musical repetition, it has succeeded in greatly increasing the pupils' power for growth in music.

We may also mention that repetition requires the use of the best quality of music, which is desirable in either private or class lessons. After undergoing the severe test of class repetitions, many a piece which seemed harmless enough has to be discarded in favor of material of more musical worth.

### 33. It is unreasonable to expect a good musician to be also a good disciplinarian.

It often happens that a person who excels in one line is very weak in other respects. Thus we find excellent musicians who are not only poor disciplinarians but poor teachers in general. Many so-called "artist teachers"

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fall in this class. In a private lesson, it is possible for a serious student to absorb much learning from such a teacher, even though very little is actually taught. This type of teacher, however, usually has great difficulty in teaching a class. If he were a good private teacher, and a poor class teacher, we would have to consider his case a serious objection to class teaching, but the fact of the matter is that he is not really well qualified for either method of instruction. The very advanced student who is well developed in all phases of musical achievement scarcely needs the extra "coaching" he might get from such an artist, and the less advanced pupil desperately needs an experienced instructor who understands the psychology of teaching and can keep in mind all the different departments that must be nourished in an embryo pianist. The answer to this statement, then, is that a good musician need not be a good disciplinarian, but that a teacher worthy of the name must have the pedagogical qualities which spell the secret of holding the pupils' interest and which result in what is commonly called "good discipline."

### X 34. An hour lesson is too long for little tots.

Little children should not sit continuously at the piano for an hour at a time. Lessons should be short and as frequent as possible. Our best success with very young children has been in summer demonstration classes, where lessons came every day for half an hour. Although it would seem that class lessons could usually be more frequent than private lessons and need, therefore, not be so long, the statement apparently indicates that a long lesson is sometimes associated with the class movement, so we will endeavor to suggest how to handle a long lesson, in case it is inevitable.

A tiny child cannot concentrate very long on work which requires fine muscular and mental coordination. The teacher must watch the attention span carefully, and as soon as attention becomes difficult, a shift can be made to another type of activity. If rhythmic games, ranging from simple walking or swinging to more involved singing games, are used in the middle of the piano period, they will contribute to musical development at the same time that they offer relaxation from mentally strenuous work. Alternation between piano playing, practice in the air, blackboard work, singing, and other kinds of classroom activity, gives a pleasant variety to the group lesson, which is possible only to a limited extent in the private lesson.

### 35. Because of the large number of pupils in class lessons, there is less opportunity for cooperation between parent and teacher.

Personal interviews with each parent are naturally more difficult when a teacher has a hundred and fifty pupils instead of about twenty. It is, nevertheless, possible to find time for talking to those parents who need special hints for cooperation at home. The class teacher is usually more successful than the private instructor in arranging an interview, because parents who would send the children alone to the private studio often come themselves to the piano classroom if they are interested in the procedure of a group lesson.

Aside from individual interviews, the parents have opportunity to cooperate simply by their presence during the lesson. In hundreds of classes

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## ANSWERS TO CRITICISMS OF CLASS PIANO INSTRUCTION

with which the authors are familiar, particularly in the Horace Mann School, in New York City, and in the public schools of Rochester, New York, there has been scarcely a lesson day without a few parent visitors, and it is not unusual to have nearly as many parents as children at the lesson. The parents are able to see what is expected of the children and can observe opportunities for cooperation without taking additional time from the teacher.

Some teachers have been very successful in organizing separate classes for parents. These groups begin with the idea of giving the parents the background to understand the children's work. Often, however, the parents become so much interested in the development of their own playing that they consider the class of intrinsic value to themselves. These parent classes thus function in two ways: to furnish a sympathetic and understanding basis for encouraging the children's work and to give the parents actual musical experience, thus forming a significant part of the present movement for adult education in music.

Another opportunity to keep in contact with parents is to invite them to frequent recitals and demonstrations. Parents who are unable to come to the regular lesson can sometimes make a special effort to attend these extra musicales.

Various forms of report cards or even weekly practice slips, signed by the parents and carrying messages between teacher and parents, are utilized by different teachers. Each one can choose his own method of establishing and maintaining a definite contact with the parents.

### 36. One of the highest aims of the private teacher is to develop the personality of the pupils. This is impossible in classes.

Since personality is rapidly assuming a recognized position as the greatest single factor in determining the business and social success of a man or woman's life, it is natural that educators are paying more and more attention to its development. Experimental schools and colleges have, in some cases, gone so far as to abolish all definite courses from their curriculum in an effort to develop men and women primarily as personable characters, and only secondarily as storehouses of learning. The man whose education is so extensive as to rival the encyclopedia, but whose personality is so negative as to make him a social liability, is no longer an object of general admiration. From the college professor to the street corner bootblack, each individual succeeds today only in part because of his skill in his trade. His personality is an increasingly important factor. Indeed, personality development is of such importance that all subjects have to be appraised from this viewpoint. We especially point this out to the music teacher as it represents a definite turn in music education. It is no longer considered sufficient for a pianist to have superior technical equipment unless he has a personal message in his playing which reflects his character as a human being. The old method formerly used by even our best conservatories, which required students to sit still for hours of concentration on a single technical problem, has been discarded because, in blunting the student's personality, it defeats its very purpose. There is no gain in providing a person with what seems to be perfect equipment for expressing himself in music if in so doing we keep him from having anything to express.

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The wise teacher has always known that one of his chief jobs is to ignite that spark of enthusiasm for music which makes the personality of a musician richer than it would be without the association with the art. Each pupil is taught to have something to say as a character and as a person and to learn to say this through the medium of the piano. Many students have been so fired with the contagious personality of a great teacher that the reflection has shown in their playing and in their personal conduct.

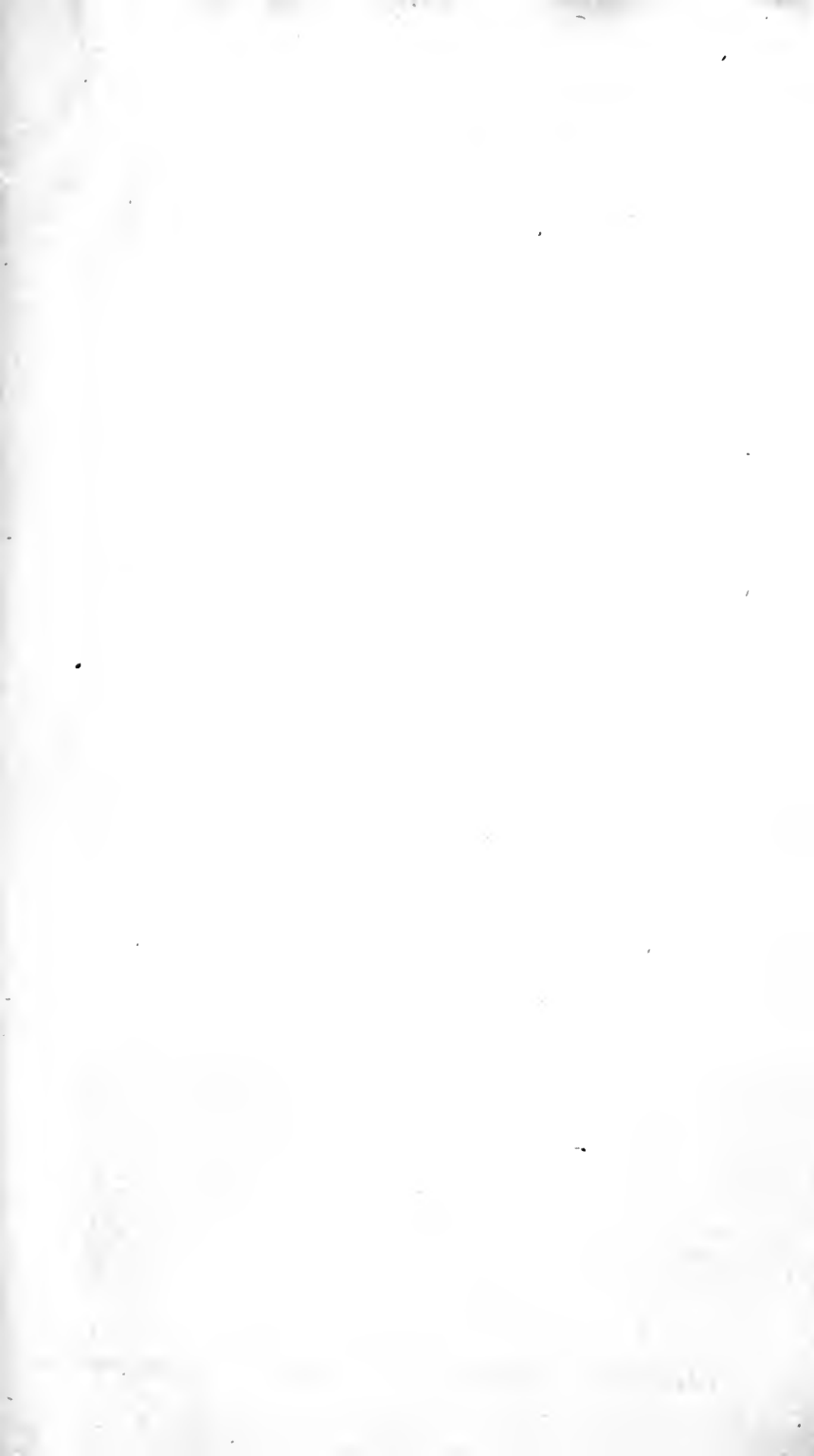
There are two extremes which make the development of personality in a private lesson dangerous. If the teacher concentrates completely on the academic and technical phase of instruction, he obviously is not helping to bring out the character traits of the pupil. If, on the other hand, the teacher is such a strong, overpowering personality that his ego dominates every minute of the lesson, the pupil will be narrowed. Both of these dangers are somewhat mitigated in the class lesson, for the teacher will soon see that a negative attitude does not succeed with the pupils, and the overpowering personality will have its reflection so divided among the group that it will not dwarf the natural response it is intended to attract.

We still have to discuss the outstanding reason for our claim that piano classes are particularly well suited for developing the pupils' personality. Education has fluctuated back and forth from an emphasis on the needs of society to the needs of the individual. Today we realize that one is essential to the other. We must consider the needs of the individual as a member of society. The piano class approximates the life situation because it enables the teacher to aid in the development of each personality as a unit and yet to stress the place of each unit in the social group. It is not enough for children to have the social need met in other subjects and to receive their piano work privately, for music, as one of the arts, has an important place in the development of an enriched personality and this must be acquired hand in hand with the social conditions that personality has to face throughout life.

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